

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO  
THE JOINT COUNCIL OF  
MUNICIPALITIES**

Prepared for

Prepared by

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## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE JOINT COUNCIL OF MUNICIPALITIES**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Erdut Agreement provided for the establishment of a Joint Council of Municipalities (JCM) to coordinate the interests of Serbian community in Eastern Slavonia. The organization was officially created in May 1997 to be financed by the Republic of Croatia supplemented by funds from the donor community. Its responsibilities were defined in a later document called the Foundation Act of May 23, 1997 and included nominating a candidate for local and national governmental offices, establishing and managing the information and communication activities of the community, monitoring and supporting all aspects of human, civic, and ethnic rights of the community, and establishing and maintaining effective contacts with the President and agencies of the national government. However, the Joint Council of Municipalities was not established as an official organization but rather as an non-governmental, non-profit citizen organization and received an initial payment of 800,000 kuna, approximately \$120,000. Since its inception, the JCM has submitted a budget proposal to the Ministry of Minorities for 3,000,000 kuna for 1999 and has reduced its staff by two-thirds. Because continued financing of the JCM remains a concern, the JCM is seeking funding from other sources. However, the definition of its status as an NGO rather than as an official agency has handicapped its role as a representative of the ethnic Serbian community in Eastern Slavonia.

The objective of this technical assistance is to develop a program of training for the JCM in organizational development, information management, and proposal writing. Two missions to Vukovar, Croatia were conducted as part of this technical assistance. One mission took place over 17-21 August period (Mission One) while the other follow-up mission took place over 21-30 September period (Mission Two). This report describes the approach and results of both missions. The first section of the report presents the findings from the mission that took place in August while the second section of the report presents the approach to technical assistance, implementation procedures, and results of the technical assistance.

### **MISSION ONE**

#### ***Purpose***

The consultants met with JCM staff, including presidents and/or vice presidents of the committees that constitute its working groups in education, sports, cultural activities, religion, human rights, health, environment, and economic development. Each member of the staff and committees presented their work of the past months, current activities, plans for the future, and perceptions of frustrations and obstacles to accomplishing their

objectives as they reflect the needs of the Serbian community in Croatia or more specifically in Eastern Slavonia.

The JCM staff gave priority to the problem of finding funds to continue operations. JCM is reorganizing now to reduce the number of employees to twenty and is very anxious about finding enough funds to continue their work. They are eager to move quickly to develop the organizational structure, programs, and proposals to strengthen their case for new financial support and identify and reach new funding sources. The purpose of the discussions was to reach agreement on what training and technical assistance would be most profitable to strengthen the current and future programs and objectives of the JCM and develop proposals to address their priorities.

### ***Observations***

The JCM staff feel that they have not accomplished very much during their time of existence as a NGO to serve the needs of the minority community in Eastern Slavonia. They feel that unless their organization has a legal/official status, the Government of Croatia will ignore the institution and its mission. JCM will reorganize to try to be more efficient but they are currently facing too many obstacles that have purposely been imposed by the government as part of the effort to repress the Serbians left in Croatia. For example, documents cannot get official revalidation, schools are facing Croatization, there is little cooperation from select local governments to handle local infrastructure problems such as waste management and little new economic development that would benefit the Serbian community.

While all this may be true but at the same time there is little activity on the part of JCM to initiate programs that might possibly bring the two communities together in efforts that are of mutual self-interest. JCM is preoccupied with trying to solve immediate crises within the community and little time is left to think about more long term public relations programs. JCM staff agree that this is important but are completely focused now on survival and trying to help Serbians in economic and cultural trouble.

### ***Proposed Training and Technical Assistance***

To address the problems discussed during Mission One, JCM staff agreed with the consultants to implement a training and technical assistance program during Mission Two that would provide:

An intensive four-day training session in careful program and organizational planning that would address the objectives, purposes, and programs that JCM wants to undertake over the next two years. The training will take the participants through a detailed, step-by-step process that addresses each of the many steps required in careful planning of an organization and the specific actions it wants to undertake, and leads to the development of plans of action with budgets, time lines, flow charts, staffing, and management and evaluation plans. Proposal writing will be one of the components of the training and therefore the training program will produce drafts of specific proposals that can be refined and submitted to organizations with funds to support the these type of proposals. The participants will have draft proposals by the end of the first week of proposal training.

These draft proposals will be reviewed and finalized so that they can be submitted within a short period after training and technical assistance has been completed. The consultants will work with staff and committees of the JCM to produce final drafts.

The consultants will also work with JCM staff and committees to review, revise, and develop information and outreach activities of the components of JCM to reach the Serbian community in need and the Croatian community to improve inter-group relations, the Government of Croatia and with local governments to overcome some of the perceived negative attitudes toward the Serbian community, the community in general and concerned international community.

The consultants will advise the JCM on new sources of funding and propose strategies for long term fund raising. The consultants started this process during Mission One by providing the JCM with a compilation of U.S. private foundations that have contributed to Central and Eastern Europe development.

## **MISSION TWO**

### ***Purpose***

Based on the output of Mission One (August 1998) to assess the needs of the JCM, consultants implemented a program of technical assistance to:

Provide training to the JCM in planning program activities and effective organizational and management structures to implement these programs

Teach and assist in the development and writing of proposals

Suggest possible funding sources

Advise the management of the JCM on organizational development

Report to USAID with recommendations for possible future actions to assist the JCM that might be communicated to various international agencies and foundations for consideration of support

### **Activities**

Over the course of the mission, key staff members responsible for the program areas, were trained in a planning process and in how to convert a plan into a proposal for program activity and how to write and budget a proposal. As a case study and possible problem for the development of a new program, the group chose to plan a new effort to address the continued social, political, and economic difficulties that the Serbian minority community in Croatia continues to face and the JCM has not been able to resolve. For example, discrimination in employment, education, housing, health services, inability to obtain revalidation of documents required to be eligible for social services, employment, and housing.

The group chose as specific program activity to try to obtain funds for the development of an international conference. The purpose of the conference would be to gain support from the international community to encourage the government to live up to and support the Erdut and other agreements related to the status of the Serbian minority in Croatia and to revalidate the status of the JCM. To achieve this objective, the group planned a three day conference and drafted a proposal to seek funds for it.

During the last few days, each program committee then developed a plan and a proposal for its priority program activities. They will complete the final versions of the proposals within the next few weeks to be submitted to the funding sources identified during the consultation.

These planning efforts were exercises to learn and practice good program planning and development, organization and management systems to implement these activities, and learn how to write complete proposals, including budgets, flow charts, and organizational plans. Some, or perhaps all, of the programs used in the exercises will result in full program plans and proposals. The proposal for the international conference,

business development, human rights, and education were drafted during the training program and hopefully will be completed within a short time.

The discussion of program development also analyzed the need for specific training and technical assistance. The economic development committee, for example, asked for training and technical assistance for its staff in planning business development, business organization and management, marketing, financing, and the development of a business information system. These are also services that the program would eventually have to provide to its clients. In fact, if the economic development program actually develops these capabilities to a reasonably professional level, it may be possible to charge clients modest fees for business services that could help fund the business development program. The program also felt that having experienced business development experts spend three to six months would bring very useful assistance for both the JCM economic development staff and for its potential clients.

The last afternoon of the consultancy was spent on reviewing the list and descriptions of about twenty American foundations. Copies of these descriptions were brought from the United States and distributed to the JCM staff.

### ***Findings and Conclusions***

JCM staff admitted that has not addressed many issues related to its objectives. In addition, the staff believe that the lack of official status and diminished political influence and financial support has made it too weak to address the issues of social, political, and economic discrimination and exclusion. The JCM is now a non-governmental, nonprofit citizen organization rather than the official agency it believes the Erdut agreements accorded it. Although it is working to find other sources of support, it would really prefer to be revalidated as an official agency and qualify for annual funding from the national budget.

There are, of course, problems internal to the JCM. The staff lacks experience in modern, non-bureaucratic management, planning, and the skills to analyze, develop, and implement some of their major areas of responsibility, e.g., economic or business development. Most of the staff are not paid and therefore it is difficult to even consider any replacement of staff with people who have skills to support project implementation. The financial situation and external pressure has forced a substantial staff reduction, except for the information group which has recently received limited funding to develop a newsletter for the Serbian community. The information group did not participate in the training sessions. This was disappointing since information support is a necessary component of all of JCM's program areas.

JCM needs to focus its energies on developing a well-organized fund raising campaign and develop and complete proposals for each program area. The training and

proposal exercise is producing several important outcomes; structured proposals with clear identifiable funding sources. These will be completed within two weeks and will be sent to select members of the international community for review and critique. The proposals will include requests for possible expert support from the international community for technical expertise.



**ANNEX A**  
**SAMPLE PROPOSAL**

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS OF  
THE SERBIAN COMMUNITY IN THE EASTERN SLAVONIA, BARANJE, AND  
WESTERN SIRMIMUM REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**SUBMITTED BY**

**THE JOINT COUNCIL OF MUNICIPALITIES  
VUKOVAR, REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**OCTOBER 1998**

## **PROPOSAL**

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS OF THE SERBIAN COMMUNITY IN THE EASTERN SLAVONIA, BARANJE, AND WESTERN SIRMUM REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

#### **I. Purpose of Proposal**

The Joint Council of Municipalities, representing 40 Serbian communities in the Eastern Slavonia, Baranje, and Western Sirmum region of the Republic of Croatia, requests a grant of \$20,430 to develop and organize a three-day conference to discuss the current condition of the political and social rights of the Serbian minority in the region, propose solutions to problems, and assess the status and abilities of the Joint Council of Municipalities to fully represent the community. The conference will bring together representatives of all concerned parties: the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Serbian community in Croatia, the United Nations, Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe, the various interested foreign governments.

#### **II. Background and Discussion**

In the agreements signed in Erdut, Republic of Croatia, in 1995, ending the hostilities within all the region, all ethnic Serbians in the region were guaranteed the full rights and responsibilities of all Croatian citizens, including the return of property and the protection of all human rights. As of May 1998, 47,976 of the pre-war population of 75,741 ethnic Serbians and approximately 4,000 refugees remain in the Eastern Slavonia, Baranje, and Western Sirmum region. Nevertheless, ethnic Serbians report continued problems of physical insecurity, loss of employment and discrimination against Serbian applicants for jobs, false legal accusations, cultural biases in schools and educational content, dismissal of Serbian teachers, difficulties for Serbian mass media to acquire licensing, inability to get financing to repair homes and lack of government assistance to ethnic Serbians for reconstruction, and the inability to get validation of documents necessary to receive social welfare support, such as pensions and child support.

The Erdut Agreement also provided for the establishment of a Joint Council of Municipalities (JCM) to coordinate the interests of Serbian community. It was officially created in May 1997 to be financed by the Republic of Croatia. Its responsibilities were defined in a later document called the Foundation Act of May 23, 1997 and included nominating candidate for local and national governmental offices, establish and manage the information and communication activities of the community, monitor and support all aspects of human, civic, and ethnic rights of the community, and establish and maintain effective contacts with the President and agencies of the national government. However, the Joint Council of Municipalities (JCM) was not established as an official organization but

rather as a non-governmental, non-profit citizen organization and received a payment of 800,000 kuna, approximately \$120,000. JCM has submitted a budget proposal to the Ministry of Minorities for 3,000,000 kuna for 1999 and has reduced its staff by two-thirds. Because continued financing of the JCM remains a concern, JCM is seeking funding from other sources as well. However, the definition of its status as an NGO rather than as an official agency has handicapped its role as representative of the ethnic Serbian community.

### **III. Proposed Program**

The conference proposed by JCM is intended to address both the continued problems faced by the Serbian community as well as the status of the JCM. It is hoped that the conference will produce agreements and actions to relieve these problems. Therefore the JCM will invite representatives of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the UN, the OSCE, the embassies of the countries involved in and interested with these issues. The agenda will focus on:

- Analysis of the current security, economic, social, and cultural situation of the Serbian community

- Implementation of signed agreements

- The role of international community

- The role and status of the JCM

- Possible actions to solve issues

- Presentation of proposals for specific program activities to be undertaken by the JCM over the next two years

### **IV. Expected Outcomes**

Although the JCM recognizes the complexities of the issues, it expects that the conference will achieve:

- Willingness to fulfill signed agreements

- Firm support from the international community

- Policies and actions to assure the equal application of laws and regulations for all citizens no matter what their ethnicity

- New agreements for improving the economic, social, and political situation of the minority communities

Possible assistance for the development of small businesses in the region

## **V. Implementation**

Time: Early November 1998 or six weeks from receipt of funding.

Location: Vukovar, Republic of Croatia.

### **Participants:**

Government of the Republic of Croatia  
Ombudsman of the Government of the Republic of Croatia  
Serbian community organizations  
OSCE  
UN  
UNHCR  
Countries represented in the Group of Article Eleven  
International Red Cross  
International Committee for Human Rights  
Helsinki Watch  
Amnesty International  
Funders

JCM will be responsible for the development and organization of the conference.

## **VI. Budget**

### Staff

Full time, 6 weeks (5 @\$800)	\$4,000
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### Participant Costs (30)

Transportation: 30 x \$83	2,490
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Accommodations: 25 x \$58 x 3 days	4,350
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Per diem: 30 x \$28 x 3	2,520
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Meals: 30 x \$33 x 3	2,970
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### Communications

Telephone, fax	600
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### Materials

Office supplies	250
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Printing, photocopying, folders	750
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<u>Interpreters:</u> 3 x \$166 x 3	1,500
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<u>Interpreting Equipment</u>	1,000
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,43</b>
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## **ANNEX B**

### **JCM DELEGATE STRUCTURE**

## **DELEGATE STRUCTURE VOLUNTEER PART**

JCM (Assembly) 50 delegates

JCM Council 11 members (JCM President, 2 Deputy Presidents and 8 Board Presidents)

JCM Boards composed of 5 members (Finances, Information, Education and Culture, Economy, Urbanism and reconstruction, Human Rights, Dps and Refugees, Health/Social Welfare and Invalid questions, Ecology)

## **EXPERT PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT** (up to 20 + 1 employees)

### **OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT (8 employees)**

1. President
2. JCM Secretary
3. Legal Advisor
4. Project Advisor
5. Economy and Health Advisor
6. Urban Planning, Reconstruction, Housing and Environment Protection
7. Interpreter
8. Secretary

### **EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT**

#### FINANCE SECRETARIAT (4 employees)

1. Personnel Clerk cashier
2. Account Cashier
3. General Service Worker
4. Secretary Administrator

#### SECRETARIAT for HUMAN RIGHTS and REFUGEES (3 employees)

1. Head of the Office
2. Human (and legal) Rights Advisor
3. Health and Social Welfare Advisor

#### EDUCATION AND CULTURE SECRETARIAT (3 employees)

1. Head of the Office
2. Culture Advisor
3. Education Advisor

#### MEDIA/INFORMATION SECRETARIAT (3 employees)

1. Head of the Office
2. Culture Advisor

### 3. Secretary/Translator

## **ANNEX C**

### **JCM RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL**



## **JCM RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL**

### **I Introduction**

#### *Origin of JCM*

In concluding the Erdut Agreement, peaceful integration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (hereafter ESBWS) into Croatian State territory began. The Joint Council (hereafter JCM) is an integral part of political dialogue that accompanies this integration process, pursuant to *Article 12*, Erdut Agreement. Serb and Croat leaders signed an agreement on May 23, 1997 that was witnessed as a founding document for JCM by UNTAES. As a result, JCM was granted self-management, its own Statute and by-laws.

#### *Purpose of JCM*

The Council's mission is to represent the interests of Serb national minority in ESBWS, to monitor and promote human rights protection, follow the realization of educational and cultural autonomy including links with Serb communities at home and abroad, as well as independent media. JCM has advisory and consultative functions:

- a) with regard to members of the Serb ethnic community in the ESBWS and their local representatives.
- b) as a partner institution for Croat authorities proposing Serb representation in public services up to the level of Assistant Minister

Through monitoring and analyzing all important aspects of Serb participation in the life of the Region, the JCM as equal member, contributes to the work of the Serb National Council which benefits Serbs in other parts of Croatia.

#### *Restructuring Goals*

The central goal of this proposal is to make the Council's work more transparent, efficient and rationally and responsibly budgeted. Changes suggested in this paper will merely re-interpret rules and previous Council structures as stipulated in the Statute and by-laws. It is the result of long and thorough analysis about management and bodies at JCM. We hope to present a model that can be financed by GoC during a six-month transition period so as to carry out streamlining measures in a socially acceptable way.

### **II Overall JCM Structure**

As before, JCM will consist of three parts: the Assembly, the Council and 8 Boards supported by an Executive Secretariat under the direction of the JCM President and his office. The Secretariat will be limited to 20 paid employees, and mainly provide expertise and professional clerical support to Council Boards (The enclosed organigram illustrates the way JCM bodies interact).

The 50-member Assembly unites appointed delegates from all Serb municipalities in the former UNTAES Region, in a manner regulated by the Statute and Act on Establishment of JCM. They are elected municipal officials in their hometowns and cities. The Assembly is the main JCM political organ. It provides global direction, passes resolutions, opinions and conclusions drafted in JCM Boards, suggests new work areas and presents a forum for public debate, addressing concerns from all municipalities.

The JCM Council includes JCM President, his two deputies, and board heads. The JCM Secretary and particular experts from Executive Secretariat are participating in the work of the Council. The Council meets on a regular basis in order to coordinate committee work and facilitate information flow between the Executive Secretariat, JCM Boards, the Assembly and other JCM working units.

*Permanent Working Bodies of the Council Include:*

3 standing commissions (that regulate election and appointment, statutory issues and verification)

8 standing boards with active participation of Assembly members, including interested outside parties. These Boards are formed in the subject areas of: Education and Culture, Human Rights, Social Welfare, Media and Information, Economics, Urban Planning and Reconstruction, Environmental Protection, Finance, and Technical Support

In the new JCM structure, standing commissions, boards and board heads are honorary bodies of JCM and may be reimbursed for work sessions only, or for participation on concrete projects. Upon initiative of the Assembly or the JCM President, Boards formulate concrete strategies and plans for action, develop policy alternatives, and support the Assembly with expert analysis.

JCM boards and other JCM bodies are professionally and administratively supported by the Executive Secretariat, a core of no more than 20 expert and clerical staff who are paid professionals with job descriptions. The new JCM structure strengthens the role of the Executive Secretariat in three main work areas: Human Rights and Social Welfare; Education and Cultural Autonomy; Media and Information, for which separate Secretariats are to be formed. These Secretariats as Board support units follow the typical pattern of: committee heads (unpaid), one or two paid experts, and professional clerical worker.

The Executive Secretariat includes a sharply reduced technical department for internal management, JCM finance and personnel issues, and general service duties under the oversight of the JCM Secretary. The JCM secretary reports to the JCM President and performs legal and protocol duties pertaining to the functioning of JCM in general, and besides that is preparing and participating in Assembly and JCM Council meetings. Additional clerical staff from the technical department is at board disposal as needed.

The Office of the President within the Secretariat is responsible for finances and coordination of Secretariat and Boards' activities, as well as for political backup and outside representation of the JCM. It works closely with the expert member of the Media/Information unit who is also the JCM spokesperson.

JCM financing is foreseen from several sources. Experience showed that is necessary to have within the Executive Secretariat experts who would be able to conduct fundraising through sponsored projects and donors. JCM Council or Boards will form ad-hoc teams to work on particular project realization and follow-up. Such project-oriented approach should create certain funds, which would, besides regular financing from the state budget supplement additional financial support to both JCM activities and manpower. Main departments in the Executive Secretariat together with the respective Boards will be able to compete for project funding with international donors, coordinated by the President's office.

### **III Concluding Remarks**

1. We are convinced that such a streamline JCM structure will provide quality work in the long run and be very cost-effective. We expect that the JCM as an institution of Serb entity, established on the Erdut-Zagreb Agreement Funding Act and Letter of Intent of the Croatian Government, will be a partner that with the new structure, be able to contribute in higher quality to the process of peaceful reintegration, trust establishment and reconciliation implementation of the Return Program and establishment of the democratic principles in civil society in the Region. In that regard, we want to intensively foster inter-ethnic dialogue with elimination of political fragmentation. We believe that the GoC will join us in such efforts.

2. Internal organization within this proposal will be determined by JCM.

President of JCM

Milos Vojnovic, Lawyer